



## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release:**

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### **Play It Safe This Summer**

#### **Utah Department of Health Issues Injury Prevention Tips**

**(Salt Lake City, UT)** – This summer, Utah emergency rooms are filling up with patients suffering from all manner of warm weather injuries. With its mix of sun, water, plants and animals, summer brings its own special brand of trouble. To help you cope with and avoid the season's dangers, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Violence and Injury Prevention Program offers these tips:

#### **MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES**

As people hit the highways on vacation, injury and death rates rise. In 2002 there were 53,370 motor vehicle crashes in Utah resulting in 329 deaths. Of those deaths, 34 percent occurred in June, July and August. Pioneer Day is the most dangerous holiday for Utah motorists, with an average of two deadly crashes a day. Unbuckled occupants are 20 times more likely to die in a crash. Wear your seat belt on every ride, put young children up to age four in a safety seat, and children ages four and older in a booster seat until they weigh at least 80 pounds and are 4'9" tall.

#### **BICYCLES**

The summer months see the highest rates of bicyclist-motor vehicle crashes, with an average of 2.5 crashes per day during June, July and August. Utah's bicycle crash death rate is 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation, with most deaths due to head injuries. Always wear a helmet and make sure your children do, too. For those who ride skateboards or inline skates, multi-sport helmets that cover the back of the head are best, as they protect better against injuries from falling backward.

#### **MOTORCYCLE CRASHES**

In July and August of 2002, there were 245 crashes – an average of four per day. As with bicycles, helmets greatly increase your chances of surviving a motorcycle crash.

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### **PEDESTRIAN CRASHES**

Summer is a dangerous time for traveling on foot. In 2002, 953 Utahns were struck by motor vehicles, and 34 were killed. Parents can lower their children's risk of being hit by a car by teaching basic pedestrian safety rules (cross only in crosswalks, don't run out in front of parked cars, look left-right-left before crossing, etc.). Parents should remember that young children have poor impulse control, which is why they run out from between parked cars to chase wayward balls even when they know they shouldn't. Supervision is key to your child's safety.

### **DROWNING**

Every year in Utah, an average of 25 people drown, and another 135 are seen in emergency rooms for near-drowning injuries. Two-thirds of all drowning deaths occur in the summer – more in July than any other month. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 1-4; the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for infants under age one and children ages 5-14, and the third leading cause for adults ages 25-44. UDOH provided drowning prevention tips in an April 30 news release. Go to [health.utah.gov](http://health.utah.gov) and click "NEWS."

### **POISONING**

Teach children to stay away from all plants and wild berries unless you are certain they are safe. Keep all lawn and garden chemicals out of children's reach. And keep the national Poison Control Center number - (800) 222-1222 - next to all your phones and stored in your cell phone.

### **HEAT**

Kids and teens who participate in summer sports need to be especially vigilant about hydration. A child can lose a full quart of water during a two-hour sports game and can soon suffer the effects of dehydration if the fluid isn't replaced on an ongoing basis. Warning signs of dehydration can include headaches, unusual fatigue, nausea, vomiting and unusual thirst.

Despite all the warnings about kids and cars, 25 children die each year in the U.S. after being left in cars on hot days. Never leave children in a car – not even for a minute with the windows cracked. Cracking a window to let air in does little to protect kids from heat buildup in a parked car. When the outside temperature is 93 degrees with a window down 1 inch, the temperature inside a car can reach 125 degrees in just 20 minutes and about 140 degrees in 40 minutes.

- MORE -

## BITES AND STINGS

With West Nile virus a continuing threat, insect repellent with DEET is a must. Put it on from dusk to dawn whenever you – and mosquitoes – are outdoors ([health.utah.gov/wnv](http://health.utah.gov/wnv)).

If you are stung or bitten by a bee, wasp, hornet, do the following:

1. Remove the stinger by scraping it away with your fingernail or a credit card.
2. Wash and cover the wound with sterile dressings.
3. Apply a cold pack.
4. Watch for signals of an allergic reaction. Some people have severe reactions to insect stings, such as a bee or wasp sting, that can be life-threatening.
5. Watch for signs of infection. A large red, raised area around the sting or bite is cause for concern. If red streaks appear, get medical help immediately.

## CAMPING/HIKING SAFETY

- Keep first aid supplies and emergency telephone numbers accessible at all times.
- Know where the nearest telephone or ranger station is and carry a cell phone if possible.
- Dress children in several layers of clothing. The inner layer should be a breathable, synthetic material that pulls moisture from the skin.
- Remember, a child's body temperature changes faster than an adult's.
- Check the weather forecast before you leave.
- Pack essentials, such as flashlights, extra food, water and rain gear in case of bad weather.
- Make sure sleeping bags are clean, warm and dry.
- Tell others where you are camping/hiking and when you'll return; learn to use a compass.
- Teach kids how to be safe and responsible in the outdoors and never let them hike alone
- Apply sunscreen often (SPF 15 or greater) throughout the day, even in cloudy conditions.
- Make sure children are physically capable of the hike's distance, pace and difficulty.
- Make sure to bring plenty of drinking water or sports drinks and high-energy snacks.
- Adults and kids over age 13 should know infant and child CPR.

Safety is hard work. It requires planning, vigilance and common sense. Use all three to make this a safe summer. For more information, visit [health.utah.gov/vipp](http://health.utah.gov/vipp) or [health.utah.gov/travel](http://health.utah.gov/travel) for UDOH injury prevention web sites, or call 801-538-6864.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*